FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
8-142D	ORLEANS		EAS.777

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
North Eastham

Address: 300 Massasoit Road

Historic Name: Asa & Eunice Higgins House & Barn

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1871, 1901

Source: deeds, vital statistics, historic maps, censuses

Style/Form: Colonial Revival/Cape Cod

Architect/Builder: Cole and Ryder, house renovations
Jesse Brewer, builder, barn addition

Exterior Material:
Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Barn (attached), ca. 1871, enlarged 1884

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
"Extensive alterations" to house, 1901

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.55

Setting: The property is located in a mixed residential and commercial setting sandwiched between Massasoit Road and the state highway.

Photograph

View from NW.

Locus Map (north at top)

Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Asa & Eunice Higgins House & Barn, built ca. 1871 and renovated in 1901, is a story-and-a-half wood frame single dwelling with a three-quarters Cape Cod plan and a kitchen wing. Its construction date places it late in the period of traditional Cape Cod dwellings, and its appearance clearly enhanced by "extensive alterations made in 1901, according to the local paper. Its unpainted wood shingle siding, center chimney made of with-century masonry, and wing porch enclosed with kneewalls and windows evince Colonial Revival workmanship. The exterior entrance vestibule has a bracketed cornice retained ca. 1871 gives an indication of the original exterior decoration of the house, which was removed in 1901. A tall backhouse is attached to the rear of the kitchen wing, and it links to an ell that connects the house to the barn. The backhouse contains short windows in the upper story, and the ell contains a contemporary sliding glass patio door in the center. The barn, perpendicularly affixed to the ell, appears to have been lengthened on its eastern end in the work documented to 1884. Devoid of wagon doors and with later fenestration, its unpainted wood shingle exterior associates the exterior appearance with the 1901 renovation or a still later time. The house is set back from Massasoit Road behind a yard but is heavily screened by foliage from the street and neighboring commercial properties.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In September 1881 Eastham farmer David Higgins (1804-94) deeded to his son Asa Higgins (1841-97) a large parcel bordering his own land, that of his son-in-law James Savage (1829-1926) at 280 Massasoit Road, and that of the Hopkins family of Campground Road.[1] The parcel was part of what deeds and newspapers call the "old general field," and the deed does not mention a house. Yet it is likely that Asa Higgins and his family had been living in a house on that parcel by 1873, when their oldest child, Clara Louise, died of typhoid in Eastham. The 1880 Eastham map labels the house on this site "A. Higgins," and the federal census of that year lists Higgins in this part of town with his wife Eunice Hattie Robbins Higgins of Brewster, whom he married in 1865, and their children Amelia, Clarence, and Wilmer. Like Clara, Amelia Winslow and Clarence Irving had been born in Brewster, in 1869 and 1870; Wilmer Leroy was born in Eastham in 1877.

Asa Higgins was working as an apprentice in 1860 and a currier in 1863, when he registered for the draft in the town of Monson. The 1865 census shows him in the household of Monson currier Charles C. Tobey with four other curriers. By December Higgins had returned to the Cape and married Eunice Robbins, and the family was living in Brewster in 1870. Cape newspapers report that he had added a new woodhouse (built by Andrew Higgins, his second cousin) to the property in 1884 and enlarged his barn (the work done by North Eastham carpenter Jesse Brewer) in 1893. Asa was among the most active of asparagus growers in town, and in 1896 he paid its tenth highest tax.[2]

Asa Higgins's father died in 1894 and his mother, Sally Swain Higgins, in March 1897, and he himself died only five months later when "an infuriated bull" attacked him in his pasture; he died the next morning.[3] In August 1898 his widow Eunice sold her late husband's farm to the brothers George P. and Samuel F. Brackett of North Eastham. The Barnstable Patriot stated in April 1901 that "Messrs Cole and Ryder" were undertaking "quite extensive alterations" to the house that George Brackett had bought from

[1] David Higgins to Asa Higgins, 10 September 1881, BCD 149:378. The deed mentions the parcel as part of the old general field, and "Eastham Town Meeting," *Barnstable Patriot*, 1 March 1892, 2, states that the town voted to discontinue the old road passing through Asa Higgins's land "known as the old general field."

[2] "Eastham and Asparagus," *Barnstable Patriot*, 17 June 1895, 2, notes that Higgins had brought the editors "a generous sample of asparagus from his garden." The newspaper stated, "A few years ago not a box was raised in the town; but now some 1,500 boxes are marketed from North Eastham alone, while there are certainly three times that amount marketed from the other sections of the town. One individual in Eastham—Mr. Luther Smith—has fourteen or fifteen acres in good bearing condition and markets some days as many as fifty boxes. A box contains thirty-six bunches. They are shipped by the night freight late in the afternoon and arrive in Boston in season for the morning market. Before long, if this industry continues to increase, this train will be known as the asparagus train rather than the fish train, as now." In 1896 Luther B. Smith paid the highest tax in Eastham.

[3] Death of the Mother of Asa Higgins, Esq., of Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 29 March 1897, 3; "Eastham" *Yarmouth Register*, 28 Aug 1897, 5.

Higgins, no doubt with an eye toward resale; in 1903 George Brackett sold 300 Massasoit Road to Henry Harding, the husband of his half-sister.[4]

Born in Maine in 1848, Henry Harding was the son of Nathan and Mary Brackett Harding, and in 1873 he married Ashsah Ella Smith (born 1849), the daughter of Richard Smith Jr. (1822-56) and Achsah Snow Crosby (1823-1903). In 1860 her mother Achsah had married Elkanah C. Brackett (1809-91), and the couple had two sons, George and Samuel.[5] In 1880 Henry and Achsah Harding were living in Swampscott, where Henry worked as a fisherman, but by 1900 they were in this North Eastham neighborhood. Harding is shown as owning his house, though it had not yet been formally deeded to him. The Hardings lived with the widowed Achsah S. Brackett, then seventy-seven years old. She died in 1903. By 1910 Henry Harding was North Eastham's postmaster, and he and his wife lived at 300 Massasoit Road with one boarder; he died in 1919.

The deed history gets muddy at this point, but Maurice W. Wiley had acquired the property containing two houses at 280 (EAS.74) and 300 Massasoit Road by 1937 when he sold them both to Emerson B. Wentworth and his wife Jennie of Roxbury in that year.[6] Emerson Bristol Wentworth was born in Boston in 1890 and by 1910 was working on a U.S. Navy receiving ship in that city. He married in 1921, and in 1928 he was the first sexton for Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline, which housed the second oldest Jewish congregation in New England. Emerson continued as its sexton and superintendent through at least 1940, and by 1941 his Masons membership card identifies him as a "cabin owner" in Eastham, which suggests that he ran a cottage colony for summer tourists. The Wentworths were themselves summer residents. By 1942 Wentworth was working for a chemical company in Cambridge.

In 1952 the Wentworths partitioned off the house at 290 Massasoit Road on a small lot and sold it to George Russell Wiley.[7] They sold the rest of the parcel, 2.80 acres with the house at 300 Massasoit Road, in 1955 to Edward and Anna E. Benz of Belmont, who owned it for a decade, and the property changed hands frequently after that point. In April 2000 Milton E. Wuilleumier and Angela D. Garton, who owned 280 Massasoit Road, sold 300 Massasoit Road to Gillian H. Drake and Ronald J. Jenanyan, and they transferred title solely to Drake in 2019.[8]

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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Deyo, Simeon L., ed. *History of Barnstable County, Massachusetts, 1620-1890*. New York: H. W. Blake, 1890.
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[4] Eunice H. Higgins to George P. Bracket and Samuel F. Bracket, 1 August 1898, BCD 235:351; George P. Brackett to Henry Harding, 3 January 1903, BCD 258:565. See "North Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 8 April 1901, 4. Eunice Higgins moved to Attleboro, where her son Clarence lived, and died there in 1929.

[5] This Henry Harding is not the same man as South Eastham's Henry Harding (1806-59), the son of Ephraim and Lucy Smith Harding, nor as Henry K. Harding (1829-92), also of South Eastham and the son of Prince Smith and Nancy Bangs Knowles Harding. Some MHC building forms confuse these men.

[6] George P. Brackett, administrator estate Henry Harding, to Alexander J. Troy, Bronxville, 28 February 1920, BCD 374:40; Alexander J. Troy, Bronxville, to Edward F. Garran, Boston, 9 May 1923, BCD 394:432; Maurice W. Wiley to Emerson B. and Jennie E. N. Wentworth, Roxbury, 13 April 1965, BCD 529:147:

[7] Emerson B. and Jennie E. N. Wentworth to George R. Wiley, 20 December 1952, BCD 888:519. George Wiley's kinship, if any, with Maurice Wiley of North Eastham is unclear.

[8] Emerson B. and Jennie E. N. Wentworth to Edward and Anna E. Benz, Belmont, 14 January 1955, BCD 898:20; Edward and Anna E. Benz to Joseph F. and Marie C. McWilliams, 13 April 1965, BCD 1294:177; Francis J. and Dorothy A. Riordan to Angela D. Szep and Milton E. Wuilleumier, Brookline, 28 June 1985, BCD 4603:36; Milton E. Wuilleumier and Angela D. Garton to Gillian H. Drake and Ronald J. Jenanyan, 29 April 2000, BCD 12973:120; Gillian H. Drake and Ronald J. Jenanyan to Gillian H. Drake, 29 January 2019, BCD 31831:6. The 300 Massasoit house is depicted on Lot 4 on "Subdivision Plan of Land Made for Francis J. Riordan and Dorothy A. Riordan," July 1983, BCP 399:37 but is not featured on the lot on "Plan of Land in Eastham, Mass., Property of Bertha A. Garran," June 1933, BCP 48:7, or on "Sketch of Land in North Eastham Mass. to be Conveyed to Emerson B. Wentworth et ux," December 1954, BCD 898:20.

Continuation sheet 2

Paine, Josiah. "Early Settlers of Eastham: Containing Sketches of All Early Settlers of Eastham." *Library of Cape Cod History and Genealogy*, nos. 32 and 33. Yarmouthport, MA: C. W. Swift, 1914 and 1916.

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MAPS

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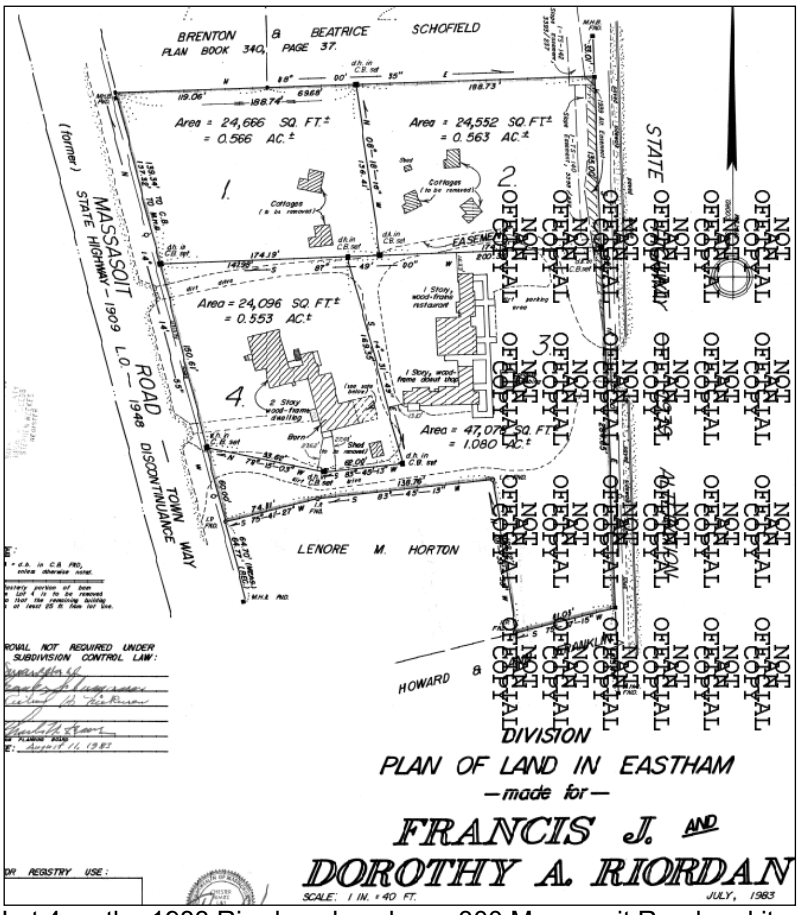
SUPPLEMENTAL IMAGES



Lot 4 on the 1983 Riordan plan shows 300 Massasoit Road and its outbuildings on the east side of the road, just west of the Hole in One Bakery and Fairway Restaurant at 4295 State Highway (BCP 399:37).

PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View from west.

View from south.

View of barn from west.